



# VETERANS EDUCATION SUCCESS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON  
A REVIEW OF THE INTERAGENCY TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
AND THE NEED FOR OUTCOME MEASURES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 8, 2017

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Veterans Education Success (VES) appreciates the opportunity to share its perspective on the Review of the Interagency Transition Assistance Program and the Need for Enhanced Outcome Measurements.

VES is a non-profit organization focused on protecting the integrity and promise of the GI Bill and other federal educational programs for veterans and servicemembers.

We appreciate the committee's desire to look at the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the need for outcome measures. Ensuring a seamless transition from military service into the civilian workforce is paramount to the long-term success of the veteran. While much has been accomplished in this area, much is still left to be done. We believe the TAP program should be viewed as a way to improve veteran outcomes by enhancing its ability to help transitioning service members make the best use of their GI Bill benefits. With that goal in mind, we recommend the following five improvements:

1. **Start the Transition Assistance Program earlier on in the military lifecycle.**  
As service members prepare to transition out of the military, their focus is on their basic necessities, such as identifying a place of residence and addressing the reality of a significant change in their day-to-day living. The current timing of TAP classes, as servicemembers are trying to walk out the door, is not scheduled well to capture their attention. In addition, because many servicemembers start to use their benefits while still in the service (such as using GI Bill "top up" or selecting a college for Defense Department Tuition Assistance and then staying

with that college for the GI Bill), VES believes that starting the discussion earlier in the military life cycle will help the service member better retain the information and provides opportunity for them to take the time needed to identify institutions and degree programs that will help them make best use of their benefits. As one former officer told the previous Education Secretary, much of the content in the TAP curriculum should really start during boot camp.

**2. Improve Consumer Fraud Warnings.**

The TAP curriculum needs stronger consumer fraud warnings. Servicemembers and veterans are frequently targets of consumer fraud, from pay day lenders and used car dealers located outside military bases, to financial companies that violate military families' legal rights, to bad actor colleges that prey on veterans for their GI Bill.

**3. Ensure Those Providing Academic Advisement are from Neutral Parties.**

It is imperative that the trainers and instructors leading TAP classes provide transitioning veterans with neutral, objective information, and with no vested interest in where the service members choose to pursue higher education. For example, some non-profit organizations sponsored by or representing for-profit college are reportedly trying to secure roles leading TAP classes with the goal of pushing veterans to use their benefits at these schools. Having neutral advisors ensures the advisement is focused on what is in the best interest of the student. Only government representatives or veterans service organizations taking no funding from colleges should lead these classes.

**4. Remove Pay-to-Play Lists from TAP.**

Currently, pay-to-play lists such as the "Military Friendly Schools" list and *GI Jobs* magazine from Victory Media Corporation are being distributed in TAP classes. FTC recently settled a [lawsuit](#) with Victory Media over their deceptive promotion of schools that made the list because they paid to be on it. Distribution of these lists in TAP classes instills a false sense of endorsement by the federal government and consequently can cause a transitioning service member to choose a school that leaves them with a useless degree that wasted their GI Bill benefits.

**5. Align TAP Curriculum to the Real-Life Experiences of Service Members**

The current TAP curriculum gives service members a laundry list of available resources, but those "death by power point" presentations do not always resonate with real life experiences. For example, VA briefings focus on health care, then benefits, and then cemeteries but don't answer why these benefits are important to the service member. Courses should incorporate questions service members are asking themselves, such as "how will I support myself" or "what do I do if I get sick" or "how do I choose a school and degree program that will best meet my needs?" VES believes TAP should be more "servicemember-focused" and less about the organizational hierarchy of each agency giving the briefings.